

MANGOKAL HOLI: BATAK CULTURAL SYMBOLISM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF PANCASILA VALUES

Ricky Canjaya Sihombing^{1a}, Marwiah Marwiah^{2b*}, Aloysius Hardoko^{3c}, Novita Majid^{4d}

¹²³⁴ Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Mulawarman, Samarinda-Indonesia, 75127

^a rickycanjayasihombing@gmail.com

^b marwiah@fkip.unmul.ac.id

^c aloysiushardoko@gmail.com

^d novita.majid@fkip.unmul.ac.id

(*) Corresponding Author

rickycanjayasihombing@gmail.com

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 27-10-2025

Revised : 15-11-2025

Accepted : 20-12-2025

KEYWORDS

Mangokal Holi,
Batak Toba,
Pancasila,
cultural symbolism,
character education,
social solidarity

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the symbolic meaning and social values contained in the *Mangokal Holi tradition* among the Toba Batak people from the perspective of Pancasila values. A descriptive qualitative approach is used as a methodology, involving data collection through in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, community representatives, and ritual practitioners, complemented by participatory observation. The results of the study show that *Mangokal Holi* is not just a ritual to move the bodies of ancestors, but a blend of customary, religious, and national values, especially where the principles of divinity, humanity, and unity are reflected in intergenerational participation and social solidarity. This tradition also shows the phenomenon of cultural resignification, observing how local customs adapt to contemporary contexts without losing their basic meaning. This research makes a significant contribution to understanding the role of local cultural practices as a medium for character education and social cohesion that is in line with the principles of Pancasila.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country rich in cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, which has been passed down from generation to generation by ancestors. This diversity is not only a characteristic of the nation, but also a source of strength that strengthens national unity. However, in everyday social life, challenges to unity and integrity still occur frequently, such as social conflicts, declining respect for ancestral values, and increasing religious intolerance. These problems not only threaten the integrity of the nation, but also contradict the basic principles of Pancasila, especially the third principle (Indonesian Unity), the first principle (God Almighty), and the second principle (Just and Civilized Humanity), which emphasize the importance of unity, respect for ancestors, and tolerance between religious communities (The community *et al.*, 2023).

One of the traditions that reflects these values is *Mangokal Holi* among the Batak Toba tribe. This tradition involves the ceremony of transferring ancestral bones to the family monument which is not only a form of deep respect for ancestors, but also as a symbol of identity, unity, and social solidarity among the Toba Batak tribe spread across various regions (Dinda *et al.*, 2023). Research shows that *Mangokal Holi* still survives and serves as a means of strengthening kinship bonds, despite having adapted to religious values and changing times (Hutagaol & Prayitno, 2020). This tradition also serves as a forum for dialogue between customs and religions, thereby strengthening religious tolerance in diverse societies (Sinaga *et al.*, 2023). Tradition *Mangokal Holi* describes the concept of togetherness in diversity which is the core of the spirit of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika.

The development of research over the past five years highlights the urgency of preserving traditions *Mangokal Holi* as a cultural heritage rich in noble values. According to researchers (Syllable) *et al.*, 2019) emphasized that this tradition not only strengthens cultural identity but also serves as a means to realize Pancasila values, such as unity, respect for ancestors, and religious tolerance. Other research highlights the changing meanings and practices, as well as the obstacles to preserving traditions amid the waves of modernization and globalization (Tobing *et al.*, 2023). In addition, there are efforts to harmonize this tradition with religious life so as not to conflict with certain religious teachings.

A number of previous studies have highlighted the social and religious aspects of *Mangokal Holi*. (*et al.*, 2024) emphasizing its role in strengthening social solidarity and strengthening relationships between families. Meanwhile, (Ambarita *et al.*, 2025) highlighting the transformation of the meaning of this tradition in the Tegah Modernization, where traditional ceremonies have adapted to religious values and changed the structure of society. However, there are still few studies that explicitly relate the symbolic, ethical, and philosophical dimensions of each stage of the procession *Mangokal Holi* with the values of Pancasila. This gap is the basis for this research.

This research aims to fill this gap through a critical analysis of symbolism, and explore the meaning of Pancasila values in the *Mangokal Holi* tradition using descriptive, semiotic, and sociocultural linguistic approaches. This research is expected to make an important contribution to the advancement of science, cultural preservation, and strengthening character education based on Pancasila values, as well as strengthening cultural identity for the Toba Batak community in the era of globalization. Based on the research above, how the *Mangokal Holi* tradition reflects the values of Pancasila, especially unity, respect for ancestors, and religious tolerance in the life of the Toba Batak community to preserve this tradition in the modern era.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative methodology based on a deep understanding of the symbolic meaning, social values, and spirituality contained in the *Mangokal Holi tradition* of the Toba Batak community. This qualitative methodology was chosen to examine in depth the perspectives and life experiences of the informants through an in-depth observation and interview process. Data was collected through comprehensive interviews with traditional leaders, community representatives, and ritual practitioners who have direct knowledge and involvement in the *Mangokal Holi tradition*. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to provide a forum for the speakers to articulate their insights, experiences, and interpretations related to the implementation of the traditional ceremony.

The informants were selected deliberately by identifying key individuals who represented the Toba Batak community and were directly involved in the implementation of the *Mangokal Holi ritual*. The interviews explore the symbolism, social values, and challenges and opportunities associated with the preservation of these traditions. The data obtained were then analyzed qualitatively using semiotic and hermeneutic frameworks based on Barthes's theoretical perspective on symbolic meaning. The analysis focuses on the interpretation of symbols and values that emerge from the interview data, as well as their correlation with the values of Pancasila, especially those related to unity, respect for ancestors, and tolerance.

To ensure the validity of the data, source triangulation and cross-verification between informants are carried out to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the information. Furthermore, a literature review was conducted to

strengthen the theoretical foundation and cultural context related to *the Mangokal Holi* tradition. Through this methodology, this research aims to provide a comprehensive explanation of the cultural values inherent in the *Mangokal Holi* tradition, as articulated from the direct perspective of practitioners and community leaders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research shows that *Mangokal Holi* is not only a traditional ceremony to remove ancestral bones, but also serves as a means to pass on moral, spiritual, and social values among the Toba Batak community. Based on an in-depth interview with a traditional leader (P. Simanjuntak) said "We do not worship bones, but respect our ancestors because it is from them that we receive life and blessings from God". community representative (M. Lumbantoruan) stated, "When we gather at *Mangokal Holi*, we are not only digging up the soil, but also digging up memories and the spirit of togetherness". The statements from traditional leaders and community representatives were also strengthened by the testimony of ritual practitioners (A. Sihombing) who added, "This ceremony is our form of maintaining the relationship between the living and those who have preceded, because without them we would not be like a sekaramg". Research has found that the implementation of this ceremony serves as a means to pass on moral values, social togetherness, and spiritual awareness between generations.

Participatory observations during the ceremony in Turunan Village, Sampurna District, showed that all family members, including the younger generation, were actively involved and documented the activity through videos and social media. The family atmosphere and the spirit of mutual support were evident in the process of preparing food, praying together, and digging graves, which were done in a respectful and orderly manner. The involvement of various generations in this procession shows that the values of mutual cooperation, respect for ancestors, and solidarity remain the main cornerstones in the implementation of *the Mangokal Holi tradition*. In addition, this ritual also functions as a means of symbolic communication that connects humans with ancestors and God Almighty, as well as strengthening Batak cultural identity in the midst of the dynamics of social change. The results of detailed observations and interviews are summarized in the following table:

Table 1
Public Participation and Perception of Pancasila Values in the *Mangokal Holi* Tradition

Pancasila Value Categories	Key Indicators	Source of Field Findings
Please-1	Interfaith prayer and recognition of God's power in Life	Interviews with Traditional Leaders and Ceremonial Observations
Please-2	Respect for ancestors without an element of worship	Ritual Practitioner Interview
S3	Adaptation of rituals with religious values and mutual cooperation	Participatory Observation
Please-4	Family deliberations and shared roles in customary decision-making	Interview Community Representative
Please-5	Distribution of roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the ceremony	Documentation and field observation

The results of this study reinforce that the values of Pancasila have been naturally internalized in the practice

of the *Mangokal Holi* tradition. The dominance of the values of humanism and unity, which shows that the Toba Batak community considers ancestral spirituality as a fundamental moral and social foundation, not just a cultural heritage. Based on interviews with traditional leaders, community representatives, and ritual practitioners, it is known that the *Mangokal Holi* ceremony consists of eight main stages. To facilitate understanding, the series of activities and the meaning of Pancasila values contained in it are contained in the following table.

Table 2
A Series of *Mangokal Holi* Traditional Ceremonies and the Meaning of Pancasila Values

No.	Stages of the Ceremony	Brief Description of the Procession	The Meaning of Pancasila Values Reflected
1	I'm going to take a look at Odyssey	Invitation and request for blessing to the hula-hula party (bona ni arina, hula-hulana i okal, tulang na	First precept, second precept and third precept
2	Martonggo King	Customary deliberations involving traditional leaders, village leaders, and communities to divide tasks	Fourth precept, and fifth precept
3	Prayer of Safety (Night of the King)	Uncle (bone) leads salvation prayer for the excavation of bones	Please first
4	Tomb Excavation Process	The excavation was carried out in stages by religious leaders, bona ni ari, bones, children, and boru until the bones were found and cleaned	The second precept, and the fourth precept
5	Bone Handover	Uncle leaves bones to young offspring	The third precept, and the second precept
6	The Celebration of <i>Holi</i>	Bones put into family monuments	The second precept and the first precept
7	Prayer and Blessing	Joint prayer by HKBP pastor at the monument location	First and third precepts
8	After-Events from the Cemetery	Prayer and eating together, the slaughter of buffalo as a symbol of gratitude	Fifth and third precepts

From Table 2, it can be seen that the structured implementation of *Mangokal Holi* reflects the application of Pancasila values in the context of the local culture of Batak Toba. Each stage of the ritual contains spiritual values (precept-1), humanity and respect for ancestors (precept-2), intergenerational social solidarity (precept-3), the principles of traditional democracy (precept-4), and social justice embodied through collective work (precept-5). Thus, this table not only illustrates the sequence of activities, but also serves as a map of Pancasila values that are alive in the cultural practices of the community.

To strengthen the validity of the findings of this study, we compared it with several previous related studies on the *Mangokal Holi* tradition and Pancasila values in Toba Batak culture. This comparison aims to confirm the position of this study as a theoretical deepening and new contextualization of the results of previous research. This research not only strengthens existing knowledge about the social and spiritual functions of *Mangokal Holi*, but also expands it by including the dimensions of Pancasila character education, intergenerational value transformation, and cultural regeneration in the digital era. As shown in the following table.

Table 3
Comparison of Findings of Previous Research and This Research

Researchers	Research Focus	Key Findings	Differences and Research Reinforcement
Silalahi <i>et al.</i> (2019)	The Meaning of <i>Mangokal Holi Culture</i>	Affirming the social function of rituals	This research adds to the educational aspects and religious symbolism
Hutagaol & Prayitno (2020)	Mechanical solidarity of the Batak people	Rituals strengthen collective morale	Expanded to multireligious and cross-generational contexts
Dinda <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Value transformation and adaptation	Modernization affects meaning	Strengthened by the dimension of Pancasila character education
Pratiwi <i>et al.</i> (2024)	Batak diaspora identity	Tradition as a tool for global cohesion	Confirmed through cross-regional participation data
Junaidi & Sundawa (2025)	Culture-based character education	Local wisdom as a social ethic	Synthesized into a custom-based Pancasila education model

From Table 3 conceptually, *Mangokal Holi* can be seen as a cultural religious system that describes the relationship between humans, ancestors, and God. This concept is in line with mechanical solidarity, in which collective rituals become a means to strengthen social bonds and collective moral awareness. This research also reveals new integrations between religious values, social ethics, and national identity that are formed through ritual adaptations to modern religious teachings. The phenomenon of symbolic resemanticization, such as showing that the old symbolic meaning in ritual is retained but given a new interpretation. For example, the procession of exhuming bones is now symbolized as a tribute to the merits and morality of ancestors, not as a worship of spirits (Preliminary *et al.*, 2024). This phenomenon supports the theory of cultural globalization, which combines local and global values to form a new inclusive and tolerant culture (Magu, 2015). In this context, *Mangokal Holi* is an example of how local traditions can adapt to modernity and religion without losing the assimilation of their original culture (Gultom & Marbun, 2024).

From a social and educational perspective, the involvement of all family members, including the younger generation, makes *Mangokal Holi* as an effective means for value education. The values of mutual cooperation, collective responsibility, and respect for differences are reflected in the active participation of the community (Makmur & Dastina, 2018). In addition, the synergy between traditional leaders and religious leaders in leading prayers and processions shows a harmonious relationship between traditional values and Pancasila ethics, in accordance with the principle of habonaron do bona (Majid *et al.*, 2024). This tradition can be used as an example of cultural education based on local policies, which UNESCO recognizes as important for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage through intergenerational education. Through this approach, it is hoped that the younger generation can understand and appreciate their cultural heritage, as well as contribute to its preservation.

In addition, there are signs of cultural revitalization among the young generation of the Batak diaspora who view *Mangokal Holi* as a symbol of ethnic identity and pride. The use of digital media such as video documentation and online media plays an important role in these cultural preservation and preservation efforts. This result proves that the values of Pancasila have been naturally internalized in traditional practices *Mangokal Holi*. The dominance of the humanitarian and unity aspects, shows that the Toba Batak tribe continues to view ancestral spirituality as a solid moral and social foundation, not just a cultural heritage. Thus, the young generation has great potential to become agents of change in preserving and developing traditions such as *Mangokal Holi* In this modern era (Riswan Zulkarnain, 2025).

Theoretically, the tradition *Mangokal Holi* can be understood as a concrete embodiment of the three main aspects of Pancasila values which are reflected in the social and spiritual practices of the Batak Toba people. First, the value of Godliness (belief in God) is seen in respect for ancestors, which is not in the form of worship, but an expression of gratitude and prayer to God for the survival of life and family. The interfaith prayer recited together before the excavation of the bones reinforces that traditional spirituality is rooted in belief in the One God. This tradition not only serves as a tribute, but also as a means to strengthen social ties and cultural identity among the Batak Toba people (Vioreza & Lumban, 2024). Second, the value of Humanity is reflected in the process of exhuming and removing bones, which is traditionally done with great respect. This act symbolizes the recognition of human dignity even after death and affirms that human values are eternal and do not end with physical life. This tradition becomes a bridge between generations, allowing the transfer of knowledge and cultural values that are essential in maintaining the identity of the Toba Batak in the midst of changing times (Hanan, 2012). Third, the value of unity emerged through the involvement of various generations and religions in the ceremony, showing the social cohesion and spirit of mutual cooperation that is characteristic of the Toba Batak community. The collective participation of people from diverse backgrounds strengthens social solidarity and fosters a sense of nationalism within the framework of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Nathania Yosefin Siburian *et al.*, 2025).

Therefore, *Mangokal Holi* is not just a traditional ritual, but a model of harmony between culture, customs, and religion, which is in harmony with the values of Pancasila and adaptive to the development of the times. This tradition shows that religious, humanitarian, and unity values can coexist in dynamic social practices, thus creating an integration of spirituality and culture. This concept also emphasizes the importance of local traditions as a source of inspiration for character education rooted in the wisdom of archipelago culture. In the context of globalization, the preservation of the *Mangokal Holi* tradition is in line with UNESCO's mandate on the preservation of intangible cultural heritage through community participation, intergenerational education, and the internalization of moral values in community life. Therefore, this research makes a conceptual contribution to the development of a new paradigm that views local traditions as a medium for the implementation of Pancasila values and the nation's moral education tools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the *Mangokal Holi* tradition symbolically depicts the combination of customs, religion, and Pancasila values in the life of the Toba Batak people. This tradition serves not only as a ritual for the removal of the bodies of ancestors, but also as a means of collective moral formation that integrates the dimensions of spirituality, humanity, and solidarity between generations. The findings show that the values of divinity, humanity, and unity are manifested at every stage of the ritual, illustrating the harmonious integration between local culture and national values. In addition, this study expands the study of the relationship between culture and Pancasila through the concept of cultural resignation (the ability of tradition to adapt to change without losing its basic meaning). Therefore, *Mangokal Holi* can be considered a transformative model of cultural heritage into a "means of character education and social cohesion," which contributes to the development of cultural anthropology, values education, and multiculturalism.

The author's suggestion is for local governments and cultural institutions to increase efforts to preserve the *Mangokal Holi* tradition through supporting policies, digital documentation, and guidance for the younger generation as heirs of cultural values. Cooperation between traditional leaders and religious leaders needs to be strengthened to maintain the sanctity of the ritual while adapting it to the dynamics of religious life today. Educational institutions are

expected to integrate the noble values of *Mangokal Holi* into the local content curriculum, especially in the field of character education based on Pancasila and local wisdom. For future research development, it is recommended to use visual and participatory ethnographic approaches so that the symbols, expressions, and spiritual experiences of the Toba Batak community can be documented in more depth, thereby supporting the preservation of intangible cultural heritage while enriching value education practices in a diverse and multicultural Indonesia.

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